

REMARKS

Applicants note that this Reply is being submitted after a Final Office Action has been mailed. Applicants respectfully request entry and consideration of this Reply, including the amendments provided herein, and believe such entry and consideration is proper. Applicants also respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and to withdraw all outstanding rejections made in the outstanding Final Office Action, and to allow the application to mature to a U.S. letters patent. Applicants believe that such action is now proper and called for, for at least the reasons provided below.

Applicants recognize that applicants cannot, as a matter of right, amend any finally rejected claims. However, Applicants also recognize that any amendment that will place the application either in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal may be entered. Since the herein provided amendments to claims 1, 13, and 15 only correct informalities that place the claims in better condition for allowance or in better form for appeal, and the amendments do not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration, entry of the Reply is proper. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that entry and consideration of this Reply, including amendments provided herein, is appropriate and timely.

Upon entry of the present Reply, claims 1, 13, and 15 will have been amended and claims 17 and 18 will have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, with claims 1, 4, 5, 10, 13, and 14-16 pending. The amendments made herein by this Reply have been made in order to expedite prosecution and should not be construed as an admission on the propriety of the Examiner's rejections.

In the outstanding Final Office Action of June 14, 2006, the Examiner rejected claims 17 and 18 under Section 101. Upon entry of this Reply, and the amendments contained herein, claims 17 and 18 will have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer thereby rendering the rejection moot. Thus, Applicants respectfully request entry of the instant Reply, including all amendments contained herein, and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection.

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 4-5, 10, and 13-18 under Section 103 as being unpatentable over Applicant Admitted Prior Art (hereinafter referred to as "AAPA") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2002/0193986 to Alphonsus A. Schirris (hereinafter referred to as "SCHIRRIS"), and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,725,256 to Nandakishore A. Albal *et al.* (hereinafter referred to as "ALBAL"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections and request that the Examiner withdraw the same and allow the above captioned application to mature into a U.S. patent.

Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of AAPA, SCHIRRIS and ALBAL do not teach or suggest, alone or in any proper combination, the recitations of independent base claims 1, 5, and 13-16. For example, the posited combination of AAPA, SCHIRRIS and ALBAL does not teach or suggest, *inter alia*, the recitations of "a receiver that receives a message from the second information processing apparatus when a user of the second information processing apparatus has accepted the schedule corresponding to the transmitted message" as recited in claims 1, 13, and 15; or, *inter alia*, the recitations of "the message return indicating whether a user of the first information processing apparatus has accepted the schedule corresponding to the transmitted message" as recited in claims 5, 14, and 16.

Instead, referring to column 6, lines 1-5 of ALBAL, which was referenced by the Examiner at page 6 of the outstanding Office Action, ALBAL teaches a message receipt notification feature that notifies a sender that the recipient has received the email message. ALBAL does not teach or suggest any indication of a status of acceptance or rejection of a schedule by the other user. Likewise, AAPA and/or SCHIRRIS do not teach or suggest, alone or in combination, any indication of a status of acceptance or rejection of a schedule by the other user. Hence, if one were to attempt to combine ALBAL to AAPA and SCHIRRIS in the manner suggested by the Examiner, the combination system would only notify the sender of an email message when the recipient has received the message, but the combination system would not indicate whether a schedule was ever accepted by the recipient. Thus, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections of pending claims 1, 4, 5, 10, and 13-16 and an indication of allowability of the same in the next Official correspondence.

Dependent claims 4 and 10 are also submitted to recite further patentable subject matter of the invention and therefore are also believed allowable over the prior art. As such, allowance of the dependent claims is deemed proper for at least the same reasons noted for the independent claims, in addition to reasons related to their own recitations.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections and an indication of the allowability of all of the claims in the present application.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants note that this Reply is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance, and no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejections is made by the present Reply. All amendments to the claims which have been made in this Reply, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Applicants further note the status of the present application as being an after final rejection and with respect to such status believes that there is a clear basis for the entry of the present Reply consistent with 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. Applicants note amendments after final are not entered as a matter of right; however, Applicants submit that the amendments made to the pending claims do not raise any new issues requiring further search or consideration. It is also submitted that the present Reply does not raise the question of new matter. Moreover, the present Reply clearly places the present application in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request entry of the present Reply, and the amendments contained therein, in accordance with the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.116, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections, and indication of the allowability of the claims pending herein.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this application, including any extensions of time required to place the application in condition for allowance by an Examiner's Amendment, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kazutoyo MAEHIRO et al.



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